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ABSTRACT

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 mandates radical changes in curriculum, finances, and governance for all Kentucky schools and requires that all schools implement school-based decision making (SBDM). SBDM involves a cooperative problem solving approach to operational decisions. New York's Johnson City school district developed an outcomes-driven decision making (ODDM) model. The model combines what research indicates about good teaching, learning, and administration to promote outstanding student achievement. The model is a system of shared beliefs based on participation, deliberation, and discussion by all professional staff through consensus. It is driven by the mission that all students will learn. Johnson City school district personnel provide ODDM training for teachers and administrators. Data from Johnson City schools indicate that student achievement improved when using the ODDM. Springfield, Missouri's Board of Education approved use of the ODDM model as part of a strategic plan. School and community partners received training to teach other adults the ODDM process, which they then took back to their schools, thus ensuring that ODDM would be commonly used throughout the district. Strengths of both the ODDM model and the Springfield model rest in the staff and patron training components for achieving desired outcomes through shared decision making practices. (Contains 15 references.) (SM)

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KENTUCKY AND MISSOURI SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MODELS

SUMMIT ON EDUCATION

NASHVILLE TENNESSEE

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The Kentucky 1990 legislature passed into law a sweeping reform act. House Bill 940 (Kentucky Legislation, 1990), the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), mandates radical changes in curriculum, finances, and governance for all Kentucky schools. Resources, such as money, material, and people, are limited in schools. No matter how large or powerful the district, not everybody can have all the resources that they want. Limited resources lead people to political means to corral the resources available (Barry, 1989; Pfeiffer, 1992). The pyramid structure of school districts reinforces a scarcity of power positions and promotes political alliances to obtain and hold these positions.

A central component of House Bill 940 (Kentucky Legislation, 1990), Section 14, requires all schools to implement school-based decision making by July 1996. A major characteristic of school-based decision making is the cooperative problem-solving approach to operational decisions (Casner-Lotto, 1988; Clune & White, 1988). This process stresses the importance of decisions being made not by the political powerful, but by those at the school level (Clark, Lotto, & Astuto, 1984; Guthrie, 1986; Marburger, 1985). In Kentucky model, the principal is designated as the chairperson of the council. The teacher and parent members hire the principal, but do not have the authority for other personnel decisions. The principal makes all other personnel decisions after consultation with the council. These legislated reforms create a new context for school leadership.

School-based decision making supports the popular idea that something must be done to make schools more accountable to the community and responsive to student needs. Schools are often the institution reflections of the community they serve. Many communities have a history of political control by a few local power brokers. This reform has changed overnight the context in which principals operate.

Any implementation of change is affected by the motivation, beliefs, and commitment of those involved in the process. When power relationships shift due to changes in organizational structure, there is a need for redefining of roles. Principals must learn how to function under a changing set of power relationships. To be successful, principals must relate their role to the new political reality at school.

The principal is in a position to either facilitate or block the change process (Fullan, 1991). Specialized professional development programs must, therefore, be designed so principals can acquire the skills and confidence necessary to meet the new demands of school-based decision making.

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School-centered decision making is intended to affect the organizational structure and climate of schools. Although school-centered decision making promotes schoolwide forming the quality of an overall school climate.

The ODDM improvement model was designed to help a school or district fully achieve its desired exit outcomes and has been validated by the National Diffusion Network (Vickery, 1990). Albert Mamary, superintendent of the Johnson City, New York central school district, is the creator of the outcomes-driven decision-making model. Based on well-designed research, ODDM "combines what we know about good teaching, learning, and administration into a single model that can be used in the quest for outstanding student achievement" (Vickery, 1990, p. 68). The model is driven by its mission: All students will learn well. A system of shared beliefs is based upon the participation, delegation, and discussion by all the professional staff through consensus. ODDM requires transformational leadership "by a person or persons with a compelling vision of what can and ought to be, who can inspire action, secure resources, and remove obstacles" (Vickery, 1990, p. 69).

Mamary (1989) characterized his delivery system by three topic areas: (a) transformational leadership, (b) philosophical base, and (c) psychological base. Mamary defined transformational leadership as "people who can create a compelling vision of what can and should be, and who can empower and enable others to realize the vision" (.), philosophical based as specific beliefs concerning learning rates and styles, and psychological base as providing a knowledge base as well as a viable set of beliefs about human behavior, such as:

1. Why do human beings do what they do?
2. How do they learn?
3. What psychological needs do they have?
4. What motivates them?
5. How can they be helped to become more effective learners and people in general?
6. What conditions do they need in order to make progress in all areas of human endeavors?

Glasser (1986) reminded us that, in addition to the need for humans to survive and reproduce, they also have four basic psychological needs: (a) love/belonging, (b) fun, (c) freedom, and (d) power. These four basic psychological needs were the basis for developing the rationale and results-driven process of ODDM.

Specifically, there are four critical questions that must be answered when a school or district adopts the ODDM process for school improvement:

1. What do we want?
2. What do we know?
3. What do we believe?
4. What do we do?

The answers to these four questions should confirm that the basic psychological needs of knowledge, beliefs, goals, and actions are in alignment and are consistent. Johnson City, New York personnel provide ODDM training for teachers and administrators. These four critical ODDM questions pervade the articulation of conditions that lead to school improvement and the perquisites for training that help others to identify these critical questions. Responses to these questions should be grounded in research, be extensive in scope, and be mutually compatible.

Five desired exit behaviors are given in the ODDM model: (a) self-esteem as learner and person; (b) cognitive levels from low to high; (c) self-directed learner; (d) concern for others; and (e) process skills including problem solving, communication, decision making, accountability, and group process. The Johnson City community agreed "to make professional decisions on the basis of appropriate research literature and relevant theory" (Vickery, 1990, p. 69).

Decision making is identified by three categories that are mutually supportive and aligned: (a) administrative support, (b) community support, and (c) teacher support. First, five elements of the program are identified under administrative support: (a) change process--assumes that everyone can become proficient but at different rates, (b) staff development--continued renewal in various stages of development in personal and organization change, (c) communication--all members are encouraged to contribute information and ideas regardless of their positions, (d) problem solving--identification and resolution of problems are processed in the best interests of students and teachers, and (e) climate--opportunities for risk taking are available (e.g., trying out new programs).

Community support is identified by three areas: (a) school board policy support--requires a clear policy statement, (b) public support--a plan of action must nurture public support, and (c) networking--community builds the level of trust in the organization that is the foundation for further progress.

Teacher support delineates five elements that directly serve instruction: (a) instructional processes--based on consensus of the entire staff; (b)

curriculum organization--provisions are to be made for students to investigate topics as self-directed learners; (c) school practices--consensus on practices such as grouping and time allotment for learning; (d) classroom practices--10 areas are agreed to be developed, and followed (i.e., testing, grading, retesting, homework, incompletes, discipline, corrective instruction, attendance, review, and enrichment); and (e) organizational structures--reflect the goals of the district. In Johnson City, teachers avoid labeling students and practice heterogeneous grouping (Vickery, 1990).

Examination of the Johnson City Central School District research revealed that eighth-grade student achievement in reading and mathematics improved (Mamary, 1989). In 1976, the California Achievement Test results showed that 44% of the students scored 6 months or above grade-level achievement in reading and 53% scored at this level in mathematics. In May 1984, test results revealed that 75% of all eighth grade students scored 6 months or above grade-level achievement in reading ($p < .001$) and that 79% scored 6 months or above grade-level achievement in mathematics ($p < .001$). Clearly, this research-based improvement model was designed to help a school achieve its desired exit outcomes,

In summary, the ODDM model is an instructional model that supports research-based classroom practices and outlines a process of discussion, participation by all staff, deliberation, and questioning that focuses on the decision-making process. The model is a system of shared beliefs and is based upon the participation, deliberation, and discussion by all the professional staff through consensus. Additionally, this model extends an invitation to all school members to contribute their leadership skills in formulating and meeting specific objectives for school improvement.

In January 1990, the Springfield Board of Education, Springfield, Missouri, gave final approval to a strategic plan that was developed by 428 staff members and patrons. Thirteen action teams had been formed to study and develop Springfield public school beliefs, mission, parameters, objectives, and strategies that would set the occasion for success of all Springfield students.

Numerous meetings and open forums were scheduled to encourage active participation of community partners in the training and implementation of the strategic plan. Participants included volunteers and individuals recommended by district administrators. These individuals were challenged to embark on a training process to help the district achieve its goals. Thus, the strategic plan cadre membership of approximately 300 adults was formed.

A commitment was required of all cadre members to (a) attend and document the hours spent in training sessions and (b) train in the use of ODDM. These expectations also included identifying the format and actual training of colleagues so that ODDM would be commonly used throughout the school district. Cadre members would not only train staff at individual school sites but would serve as resources persons in the development of school improvement plans.

Central office stressed that there is dignity and value in work and prepared a training agenda that included consultants, authors, researchers, materials, and communications to address the teachers role in the school improvement change process. These training sessions were provided to support previous district training in cooperative learning, mastery learning, and/or outcomes-based education.

The fourth annual Springfield Leadership Conference was held August 14-17, 1990. The theme of the conference was symbolized by a train pulling up hill with the subtle message being, we know we can . . . we know we can . . . we know we can. Throughout the sessions, learning styles, paradigms, decision making, team building, problem solving, consensus training, and the readiness level of participants and those whom they were to train were targeted.

New York's Johnson City Central School District personnel addressed the basic psychological needs of knowledge, beliefs, actions, and wants as key in defining and achieving goals in their training model. This training model and the model the Springfield public schools is developing are dependent upon the people who help create the framework and design the model. Specifically, it is the people who create, train, and ultimately help develop the participatory change process.

In summary, the Springfield, Missouri strategic plan that was developed by 428 staff members and patrons helped to guide the training of a schoolwide community staff development process. The cadre experience involved adults who volunteered to learn how to train other adults in the ODDM process who could, in turn, bring about the desired change in individual schools. During the training, a review of learning theories was presented and various methodologies and strategies were discussed. Opportunities for role playing, question-and-answer sessions, teaming, written and visual materials, distinguished researchers and practitioners, problem solving, and consensus building were provided during the training process.

In reviewing the ODDM and Springfield models it is clear that the strength of both models rests in the staff and patron training components

for achieving desired outcomes through shared decision-making practices. The emphasis on "bringing the school community along" to be self directing is secondary to what drives both models; namely, developing, supporting, and implementing effective teaching and learning practices.

Clear advantages in the training sessions of these two school improvement models are as follows: (a) the models are derived from definitive research; (b) training participants are granted opportunities for dialogue and problem-solving activities; (c) classroom practices are centered in 10 areas--testing, grading, retesting, discipline, homework, incompletes, attendance, corrective instruction, review, and enrichment (the Springfield model added grouping); (d) adult learning theory is incorporated into the training; and (e) team-building and consensus training are provided.

While both models provide training that focuses on achieving desired student outcomes through shared decision making, I submit that the following procedures would enhance the training: (a) staff development sessions that reflect the trainers' knowledge of their targeted audience as it relates to adult learning theory (e.g., transitional levels of the adult learner); (b) repeated emphasis that the training must not be perceived as a "quick fix" to school improvement; (c) particular attention and time allotments should be scheduled in developing an academic vision for each school that compliments the district's mission; and(d) training that includes break-out sessions for leadership training, which includes not only effective instructional leadership behaviors but also strategic thinking as well (Hallinger & McCary, 1990).

In Kentucky school based decision making provides more control over organizational direction and strategies for achieving the goals of the school (Carnoy & MacDonnell, 1990; David, 1989; Murphy, 1991). School ownership of decision making and community involvement facilitate the development of a collaborative, participatory culture (Murphy, 1991). Clear focused goals are vital to long term school improvement efforts. Principals who truly believe that the presence of certain values is critical to the success of their schools will attempt to model those values.

School based decision making in Kentucky, thus, seeks to give greater control to the school. The ability to allocate funds to implement initiatives is one key facet of school based decision making (David, 1989; Lindelow, 1981). The reality of monetary constraints often creates a scarcity mentality in schools, further complicating the budgeting process. In Kentucky, the school councils were given the opportunity to control funds allocated for each location. School personnel also have the option of

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taking money budgeted for other purposes to increase staffing or change the staffing pattern within their school.

Instruction should be guided by a preplanned outcome driven curriculum based on national standards. Instruction should be focused on increasing student achievement by meeting the goals of the school. Standards for classroom behavior should be clear and consistent with school goals.

Implementing change at the building level that will encourage the school sites to become self directing while impacting student outcomes is an awesome task. Training experiences will assist in rethinking and help in replacing routine practices. Hoverer, it is vital to our educational system that we examine our current methods and roles in preparing our students for the challenges of the 21st century (Schlechty, 1990).

As schools develop new models of decision making involving the school as a community of learners, less focus will be placed on the traditional role of the principalship. Emphasis will be on providing opportunities for schoolwide community leadership.

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